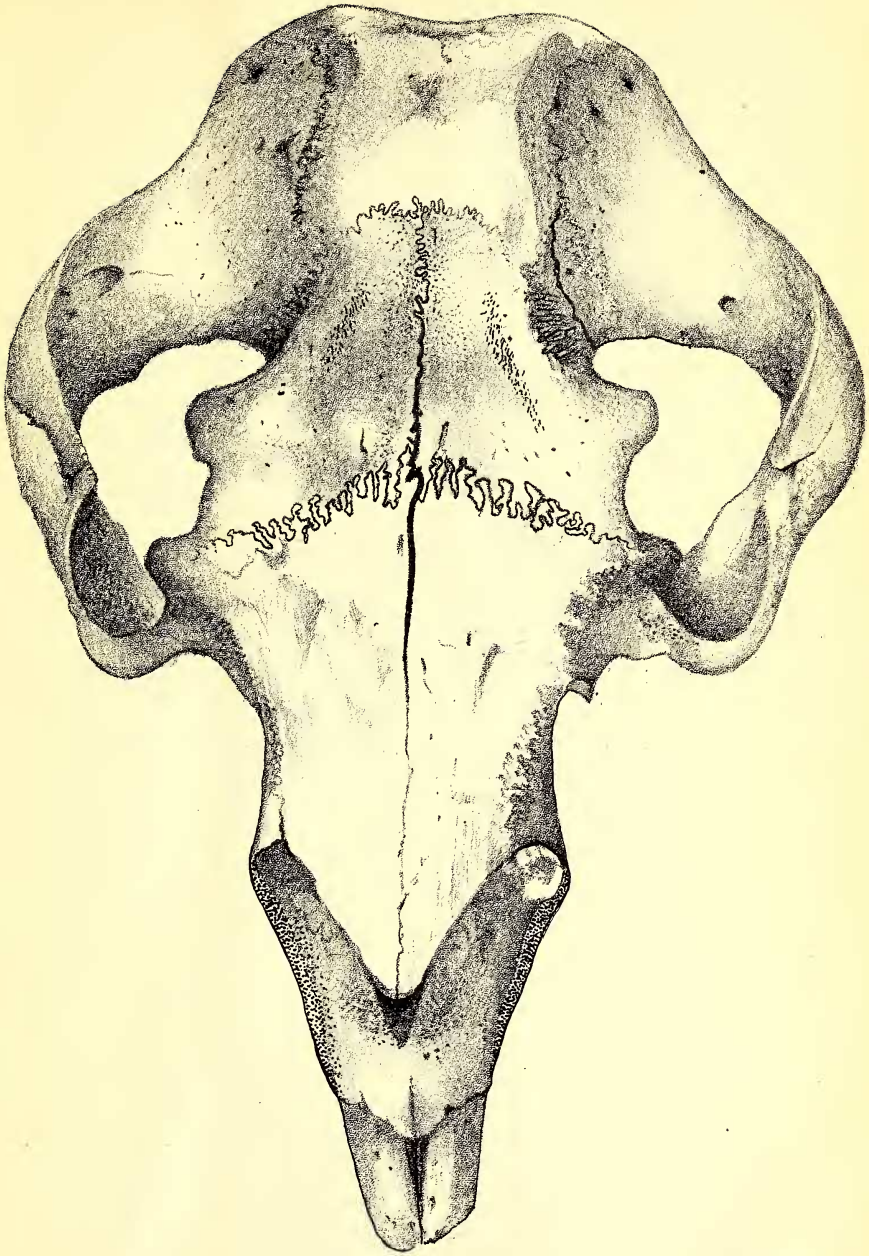
A NEW SPECIES OF HAIRY-NOSED WOMBAT.

The existence of a wombat in this country is said to have been long known to bushmen living at certain points adjacent to the border of New South Wales. Occasional rumours of it have, indeed, during many years, reached Brisbane, but either they have died away—"a voice and nothing more"—or proved, as usual, mere bruit of error, causing too often a wild-goose chase. A Queensland wombat was, therefore, to my mind, fast becoming a myth, when a letter from Mr. Gillespie, of Bullamon Station, on the Moonie River, told me that the skin of an animal, which he judged to be a wombat, had been brought to him by a dingo-shooter in his employ. In the absence of any suspicion that wombats on this side of the border would be anything other than pioneers of the New South Wales species spreading northward, Mr. Gillespie's information only excited the hope that this species might be claimed as a constituent of the Queensland fauna. Greatly to my surprise I found, on receiving the skin, that it was from a quite different animal; in short, that if there were a known species to which it could be referred, it would be the *P. latifrons* of South Australia. The furry nose and silky fur of *P. latifrons* were clearly in evidence, yet, as the characteristic colour-marks given in published descriptions appeared to be wanting, the identification was incomplete. But, as the apparent absence of these might possibly be due to the confusion of colours occasioned not unfrequently by the wrinkling of roughly dried skins, or, considering the geographical remoteness of St. George from the habitat of the southern species,* merely the result of local conditions, it could not, on the other hand, be said to be distinct. While in this doubt I had the satisfaction of receiving from Mr. Gillespie, not only the bones appertaining to the skin, but the green pelt and carcass of a second example, and subsequently a third skull, the only part of the skeleton which he had been able to recover from an animal which had been drowned in a flood in the year 1891, some miles to the north of St. George. From these skins and skeletons there is no difficulty in determining that the wombat represented by them is distinct from all the three known species. Its rhinarium is hairy, its fur silky, and its ears elongate; leading features in which is in strict accord with the southern species. The inner surface of its ears, indeed, is hairy, whereas that part in *P. latifrons* is said to be naked, yet this in fact is only a partial difference, for in an example of *P. latifrons* serving for the present comparison, the ear within is clothed in part with hair, similar to that forming an entire, though scanty covering of the skin in Mr. Gillespie's animals. This same example of *P. latifrons*, a female, shows that two other features entering into the published descriptions of it, a white rhinarium and a black chin, are not really so, since they are both inconstant; only the middle of its chin is dark, and no part of its nose is white; variations in colour in virtue of which it is in further agreement with its northern relative. In general

* Professor Stirling, in answer to an enquiry, is good enough to say: "Referring to the distribution northward of the wombat, the furthest north I can hear of it is the Gawler Range, which lies north-west of Port Augusta, at the head of Spencer's Gulf. This is probably *P. latifrons* as we have only received *P. Michelli* from the south-east.



Phascolomys gillespiei.

Phascolomys gillespiei.

colouring, however, the new wombat seems to differ rather considerably from its ally, but until we are better acquainted with the limits of variability in this respect imposed on each, divergencies of the kind have not much defining value. In the proportions of the head the two wombats differ distinctly, the Queensland animal having this considerably longer, and between the eyes broader, though between the ears no broader; it is also longer in the body and shorter in the leg, but on such differences, also, it it not altogether safe to rely until they are known to be beyond the extreme limits of specific variability.

From external characters, which, as far as we know, do not quite enable us to determine the question at issue, appeal lies naturally to the skull (Plate IX.). This leaves no room for doubt. Its characters in three examples of different ages and both sexes are as constant as those of any of the known species, and its differential features are scarcely less pronounced. They are as follows:—Skull broader in proportion to its length than in the other species, frontal absolutely shorter, and nasals at the nasal orifice much broader; nasals extending backward between the frontals, lachrymal protuberance well developed; nasal spine of the intermaxillary high and projecting; all the nasal sutures, especially the naso-frontal, intricately interlocking.

It will be observed that in the proportions of the skull, the shortness of the frontals, anterior breadth of the nasals, the projecting nasal spine, and in the pronounced ramification of the naso-frontal suture,* the skull stands aloof from those of the other wombats; in the cuneiform extension of the nasals between the frontals, and the greater prominence of the lachrymal tuberosity it agrees with the skulls of *PP. platyrhinus* and *ursinus*. Yet these signs of affinity with the naked-nosed wombats and these peculiarities of its own notwithstanding, its facies is that of *P. latifrons*.

External Characters, Plate X.

In the flat and wrinkled skin of an immature male with the fur close and comparatively long (25 mm.), the colour is a tortoise-shell-like mixture of deep fawn, black, and grey, the first predominating on the head and flanks, the black (caused by an excess of hairs largely tipped with black) on the back, and the grey on the abdomen and inner surface of the limbs; preocular region, middle of chin and perineal hair as in the female; inner surfaee of ears fawn; scrotal region white.

In a stuffed female of adult age with shorter and scantier fur, the general colour is grey, mottled with black where the black bases of the hairs show through, and washed with fawn, especially on the rump and back; rhinarium brown, passing into the colour of the upper surface; a broad curved blotch before and a spot behind the eye black; no white marks on the head; inner surface of ears, throat, chest, and mammary glands white; middle of chin, outer surface of

* A minute corrugation of the edges of these ramification has been omitted in the figure.

ears, forearm, feet, and perineum dark brown. Total length 1,020 mm., ear 85 mm., head to fore edge of ears 200 mm., between the eyes 113 mm.

In both sexes a sacral crest reaches the tail, and the perineal hair is bristly.

The four living species of *Phascolomys* now known seem to arrange themselves into two groups, distinguished as of old externally by harsh or silky fur, naked or hairy nose; internally by cranial dissimilarities and by a normal or abnormal number of ribs; but through the intervention of the new species more closely interrelated than we had previously any reason to suspect. As the features common to the two northern species point backward to a common ancestry, so do they point forwards to the two southern forms as their more or less modified descendants.

A case of two related species displaying in widely-separated localities racial differences in the skull, while agreeing in those external characters which distinguish them from the rest of the genus, is not without interest.

A craniologist comparing the skulls would hardly suppose that they came from animals so much resembling each other externally. Moreover, a lasiorhine wombat, with cranial features shared by the gymnorhine members of the genus, would appear to stand somewhere near the point of divergence, in a line of ancestry common to the naked and hairy-nosed species, and does not lose interest on that account.

Mr. Gillespie has so fully identified himself with the discovery of this wombat, that it is but a measure of justice to him to endeavour to perpetuate the memory of his good offices by proposing for it the name Phascolomys gillespiei.

MEASUREMENTS OF SKULLS.

	Old male.	Young male.	Female.
Entire length	185 mm.	... 182 mm.	... 179 mm.
Entire breadth	142 ,,	... 132 ,,	... 133 ,,
Length of nasals	78 ,,	... 83 ,,	... 80 ,,
Greatest breadth of nasals ..	65 ,,	... 63 ,,	... 64 ,,
Least breadth of nasals ...	35 ,,	... 32 ,,	... 34 ,,
Breadth between temporals ...	45 ,,	... 42 ,,	... 40 ,,
Breadth between postorbital processes	76 ,,	... 68 ,,	... 70 ,,
Breadth between orbits ...	67 ,,	... 60 ,,	... 62 ,,
Palate	105 ,,	... 102 ,,	... 100 ,,
Diastoma	47 ,,	... 46 ,,	... 42 ,,
Expansion of nasal process of premaxillary	45 ,,	... 42 ,,	... 45 ,,

Mr. Gillespie is good enough to inform us that his wombat affects level country covered with red soil in which it forms its burrows; that it is only procurable shortly before the dawn of day; and that it is known to the dark native of the district by the name of "Yaminon."

By Authority: Edmund Gregory, Government Printer, William street, Brisbane.